

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

I am a 4th year medical student at Yale, living in New Haven.

I stand in support of HB 6616: “An Act Concerning Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status”. Expanding access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status is an important step in ensuring our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we need. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals up to age 26 have access to health coverage.

I am where I am today in part because of Medicaid. I come from a working-class family in a Georgia suburb. Medicaid paid for my vaccinations, my yearly check-ups, and every pair of glasses I got from age seven until my teen years. When I got a sore throat, Medicaid helped cover the cost of the bubble gum flavored antibiotics my mom got me. Because of Medicaid, I grew up healthy and rarely missed school. I aspire to be like the doctors I knew as a kid—primary care physicians that helped patients overcome financial obstacles to being healthy.

Immigration status can be fluid. Visas expire. Students graduate from college and don’t get sponsored by their jobs right away, or ever. Families escape war-torn countries and wait for years while their asylum cases are processed. The reasons why some immigrants are welcomed into the US and others aren’t are ever-changing, somewhat arbitrary, and often unfair. My parents are immigrants, and they weren’t always documented. But they have always worked, paid taxes, and paid into programs they weren’t sure they would benefit from, like Social Security and Medicare.

Already, during my experiences learning and working in hospitals, I have seen patients like my parents die of preventable causes because they didn’t get care that they couldn’t afford. I remember each and every one of them. Every time I think about them, I feel rage, grief, and motivation to change the system. Passing HB 6616 is a step towards changing the system in a positive way.

Passing HB 6616 would also mean that fewer members of the New Haven community would have to rely on our student-run clinic for medical care. Instead of seeing an ever-changing panel of “providers”—unlicensed trainees with very little primary care experience—for their care, they would see actual doctors and nurse practitioners. They would have better, more consistent access to necessary prescription medications. They deserve good health and wellbeing as much as I do.

I support HB 6616 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation out of committee in its current form - to expand HUSKY access to age 26. Our work does not end with expanding access up to age 12 nor with expanding access up to age 18. And that work must continue this year by expanding HUSKY access up to age 26. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
A concerned future physician